REMARKS

Claims 1-59 are pending. Claims 1-31 are withdrawn from consideration. Claim 34 is objected to as being of improper dependent form. Claims 35-39, 54-55 and 58-59 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the enablement requirement. Claims 32-59 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Claims 32, 35, 40, 42-46, 48-50 and 52-53 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,326,612 to Goulait ("Goulait"). Claims 32, 34-56 and 58-59 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Goulait in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,503,855 to Menzies et al. ("Menzies"). Claim 33 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Goulait in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,217,693 to Pelham ("Pelham") or U.S. Patent No. 6,342,285 to Shepard et al. ("Shepard"). Claims 33 and 57 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Goulait in view of Menzies and further in view of Pelham or Shepard.

To expedite prosecution of the application, Applicants have cancelled Claims 34-39, 54-55 and 58-59. Accordingly, the objection and rejections under §112 are obviated.

Applicants respectfully traverse the §102 and §103 rejections for at least the reasons set forth below.

§102 and §103 Rejections Are Overcome

Applicants have discovered a novel method of forming loop structures from spunlaced fiber that can be used as the female component of a hook and loop fastening system. According to this novel method, loop structures are formed ***only*** by entangling the fibers of a spunlaced fabric, without requiring any bonding whatsoever, either to other fibers or to a layer of material. Prior to Applicants' invention, prior art loop structures used for female components of hook and loop fastening systems required a certain amount of fiber bonding, either to other fibers or to a layer of material, such as a backing layer, to produce loops suitable for receiving and retaining hooks from a male component of a hook and loop fastening system. No one, prior to Applicants' invention, has taught or suggested creating loop structures ***only*** by entangling fibers in a spunlace process and without requiring the fibers to be bonded to one another and/or to a backing layer.

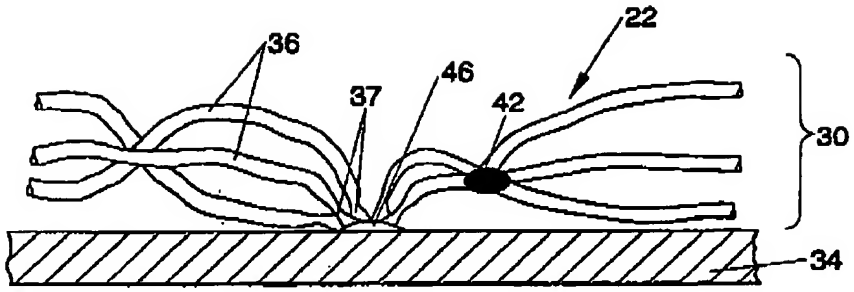
Accordingly, Applicants' amended independent Claim 32 recites a loop component for use in a hook and loop fastening system, comprising:

> a spunlaced nonwoven fabric having a plurality of loop structures formed ***only*** by entangling a plurality of non-interbonded fibers in a fibrous web of material, wherein the plurality of loop structures define a landing zone for receiving hooks from a male component of a hook and loop fastener, ***wherein the loop structures in the landing zone contain no interbonded fibers and contain no fibers bonded to a supporting layer***, wherein between about two percent and about twenty-five percent (2%-25%) of a surface area of the landing zone is bonded in one or more patterns to reduce fiber fuzzing and pull out caused by hooks engaging with and disengaging from the loop structures of the loop component, and ***wherein loop structures remaining in the landing zone contain no interbonded fibers and contain no fibers bonded to a supporting layer***.

Applicants' amended independent Claim 56 contains similar recitations.

The nonwoven female component described in U.S. Patent No. 5,326,612 to Goulait ("Goulait") requires bonded fibers to form loop structures. The fibers described by Goulait can be bonded either by thermally bonding the fibers together or by bonding the fibers to a backing layer. Either way, Goulait ***requires*** some form of bonding to produce loop structures. Without bonding, Goulait would have only loose fibers.

Fig. 4A of Goulait is set forth below:



Goulait specifically states that his nonwoven web 30 used in the female component 22 refers to "fabrics made of fibers held together by interlocking or bonding." (Goulait, Col. 8, Lines 55-56). Fig. 4A clearly illustrates an inter-fiber bond 42 and bonding 46 to a backing layer 34.

Moreover, on page 13, Goulait states:

> The quantity of inter-fiber bonding depends on the type of nonwoven material used when the female component 22 is manufactured. The nonwoven web 30 used could be initially unbonded and then later bonded during the process of manufacturing the female component 22. For instance, the female component 22 could be made by bonding an unbonded layer of loose fibers to a backing material, in which case there may be no inter-fiber bonds 42. (Goulait, Col. 12, Lines 41-49)

Clearly, Goulait forms loop structures by inter-fiber bonding and/or by bonding fibers to a backing layer. Without either bonding to a backing layer or inter-fiber bonding, the fibers of Goulait cannot form loop structures that can serve as the female component of a hook and loop fastening system. Goulait specifically states this (*i.e.*, that unbonded or partially bonded fibers will be uncapable of entangling and holding the hooks of a hook component). (Goulait, Col. 10, Lines 56-61). Clearly, to the ordinary artisan, there is substantial difference between the claimed invention (*i.e.*, a spunlaced fabric wherein all loop structures are formed only by entangling fibers) and the primary reference, Goulait.

Nothing in Goulait describes or suggests ***only*** entangling the fibers of a spunlaced fabric to produce loop structures for a female component of a hook and loop fastening system without some sort of fiber bonding. Moreover, nothing in Goulait describes bonding between about two percent and about twenty-five percent (2%-25%) of the surface area of the landing zone in one or more patterns to reduce fiber fuzzing and pull out caused

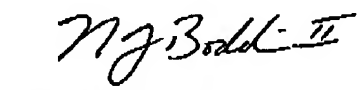
by hooks engaging with and disengaging from the loop structures of the loop component, and wherein loop structures remaining in the landing zone contain no interbonded fibers and contain no fibers bonded to a supporting layer.

The secondary reference, Menzies, describes a laminated composite suitable for use in medical products such as tapes and wraps. The composite includes a first nonwoven fiber layer, an elastic layer, a melt blown adhesive fiber layer, and a second nonwoven fiber layer. The non-woven fiber layer(s) and/or the scrim layer form suitable loops for a hook and loop fastening system. Menzies fails to teach or suggest a spunlaced fabric having a plurality of loop structures formed ***only*** by entangling loose fibers in a fibrous web of material and without bonding the fibers together and/or bonding the fibers to a backing layer. Moreover, no clear and particular evidence has been set forth as to why Menzies would lead one skilled in the art to remove the inter-fiber bonds and/or the bonds of fibers to the backing layer in the Goulait female component, especially in light of the fact that Goulait specifically states that unbonded or partially bonded fibers will be uncapable of entangling and holding the hooks of a hook component. (Goulait, Col. 10, Lines 56-61).

Nothing in Menzies, Pelham or Shepard describes bonding between about two percent and about twenty-five percent (2%-25%) of the surface area of the landing zone in one or more patterns to reduce fiber fuzzing and pull out caused by hooks engaging with and disengaging from the loop structures of a loop component, and wherein loop structures remaining in the landing zone contain ***no interbonded fibers and no bonds to a backing layer.***

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the present rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102 and §103, and respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance, which action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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